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AUTHOR Gougher, Ronald L., Ed.; Bockman, John F., Ed.
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ABSTRACT

This newsletter begins with an editorial comment on the current progress of foreign language individualization. Other items included are: "Practical First Steps for Individualizing--Suggestions for Teachers Who Must Start from Scratch" (Ronald Gougher); "A Statement on Skills and Feelings: The Dimension of 'Depth' in Individualization" (Earl Stevick); "Guidelines for an Inservice Workshop and Checklist of Learning Activities and Objectives" (Robert McClennan); "Individualized Spanish for English Speakers" (Mirta Vega). Notes of interest to teachers planning individualized foreign language instruction and bibliographic references relevant to the subject are also provided. (LG)

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# INDIVIDUALIZATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN AMERICA
## VI. SPRING, 1973
## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Referring to human work skills and attitudes and not to human beings themselves the ten-year Harvard project, Technology and Society, concludes that today "an individual may be obsolete and totally unaware of it." To fight the new phenomenon of greatly accelerating early obsolescence of skills, Paul Armer speaks of "Educational Security" to protect the individual's occupational future much in the way Social Security protects his retirement future.

As professionals, some of us spent a good part of the 1960's updating and upgrading our language and teaching skills through NDEA and EPDA institutes. We may well wonder why obsolescence now hangs heavy and threatening. Have we not "done our darndest?" What more do "they" expect of us? To the growing chagrin of many professionals (or, perhaps, finally to their credit) academe is moving into the public arena where the performance criterion reigns supreme. How strange some of us feel!

As editors of this newsletter well into our second year of gathering evidence of grassroots support for individualization of foreign-language instruction, we are pleased with the steady increase in reports coming to us from teachers and administrators at various educational levels from all regions of the country. We sense growing responsiveness to the performance criterion. We are happy to see nationwide interest in in-service workshops devoted to individualization. However we should like to caution our colleagues that revising materials, rearranging space and time schedules, relabeling courses, etc. (that is, modernizing the package) are the very least of the reforms needed to forestall obsolescence.

The critical area most in need of reform, is teacher + student relationships. The goals should be to reform ourselves. To achieve this, whether early or late in our careers, we should assess our personal strengths and weaknesses and speak realistically about ourselves, our schools, and our students. We are seriously suggesting self-analysis and introspection in order to meet the needs of the individuals we serve within the limits of our own capabilities. Let's be rigorously honest with outselves!

The processes of self-analysis and introspection should lead us to cautious, measured, successful steps toward individualization. Many of the "whole-hog," mass-imitative, "follow-the-leader" approaches will end, we predict, in large failures. Let us concentrate on our slowly evolving roles and be cautious about our existing ones. Above all, let's recognize obsolescence when it is upon us!

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Edited by:

Ronald L. Gougher
Associate Professor of German
West Chester State College
West Chester, Pennsylvania

John F. Bockman
Learning Development Center
Tucson Public Schools
Tucson, Arizona

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## Practical First Steps for Individualizing -- Suggestions for Teachers Who Must Start from "Scratch"

After most teachers have taught a class for a few weeks they begin to note that there are significant differences in student performance. Using just one such class as an example, I will outline how one might employ a cautious approach to individualizing.

First of all, it is suggested that this class be at the second or third level (under the normally-used credit granting system). Most second or third level classes consist of about twenty-five students. So will our hypothetical group. While each instructor may well continue to teach four other classes (as he did before) for a year, this "pilot class" will serve as a beginning experience for him, his students, his administration, and community.

After the first rating period (six to nine weeks) grades may have to be assigned, but at that time the teacher of the "pilot class" will use the evaluations as indicators of what some students know well and what some students do not know well. Based on the evaluations the teacher should decide how he can individualize his instruction to help each student learn at his own optimum rate.

It is probably true that the six to eight students who received an evaluation of "A" in this class could have learned more in the time given for the instruction. It is also very probable that the twelve to fourteen students who earned "B" or "C" evaluations were learning as much as they could in the time given. Then, too, the three to five students who earned only a "D" (or worse) probably could not learn the material presented in the time given.

Realizing that the students who have earned an "A" might learn more than will normally be required for the next rating period, the teacher must think of ways to allow these students to learn best from small group instruction. The teacher might decide to teach all twelve students as a group because he believes it is all he can do to manage small groups. Students who have failed (or nearly failed) may have to be taught in remedial fashion.

How one does it is, for the most part, an individual matter; however, the reader may find the suggestions offered here helpful to give direction.

1. Show the students how to use equipment for listening.
2. Orient the advanced students in the independent study component and show them how to follow directions that are written.
3. Encourage the advanced students to move ahead more quickly and guide them as much as time allows.
4. Perhaps two or three days a week these advanced students could work in the library or in some other place that is isolated as much as possible from the group instruction.

5. Teach the middle group on a day to day basis.
6. Even though the advanced group might be learning the sixth unit (chapter) in the text by the twelfth week, while the middle group is only working on unit four, large group instruction will still be possible.
7. Bring the advanced students together with the middle group (and slower students at times) for oral practice, substitution drills, and so forth two or three times a week. Even though the advanced students have learned the fourth unit a few weeks before, they can benefit from repetition and practice in the unit which the middle group is studying for the first time (unit four). Such a process gives the teacher a chance to provide for more oral practice and also to evaluate pronunciation, intonation, and basic conversational ability for all students.
8. Provide additional material and activities for the advanced students who can benefit from them. Thus a process of horizontal progression might be started.
9. Teach as many remedial lessons to the slower students as possible. Do this while the advanced students are working independently and the middle group is practicing lessons already presented or while they are writing, reading, and so forth in the classroom.
10. Begin to revise the credit granting system so that the advanced students can be rewarded with credit as soon as they achieve the proficiency required. As well, the teacher must try to allow the slower students to earn less credit but at a higher proficiency level than "C."
11. Begin to solve the articulation problem by cooperating with other teachers.

By the end of one year it would probably be good to award more than one credit to the advanced students, one credit to the middle group, and less to the slower group (but not "D" for effort in more work.) Naturally, students might move from one group to the other, periodically. The amount of movement will, again, depend on how well the teacher can control it.

Important factors for the benefit of the teachers are:

1. Teachers will have a chance to see how <u>other</u> students in the school react to the new program.
2. Teachers will have a chance to learn the new working relationships with the administration, follow foreign language teachers, other staff members, and the community.
3. Teachers will have a chance to assess themselves in their new roles.
4. <u>Programs</u> will be developed on a more realistic basis in each school.

If this process is used there is less chance of outright failure for students <u>and</u> teachers. Since each teacher is implementing the program in only one class, he can "retreat" to large group instruction as often as he believes it is necessary.

Each teacher will grow with the program or realize this type of instruction is not for him or her, and some teachers may well remain "large group" instructors as the "program" in the school develops. Others might supervise more independent study: yet others might be responsible for more small group instruction and remedial work.

From this process the teachers in the foreign language department might develop their program further. Teachers should never go beyond the point where quality, interest, and motivation break down for the students and the teachers.

The reader should not think that these first steps are any more than a beginning for individualizing. --Ronald L. Gougher

## A Statement on Skills and Feelings: The Dimension of "Depth" in Individualization

Human cognition in general is still largely a mystery and will always remain a wonder. Individual cognitive styles, moreover, differ from one another in ways that are sometimes gross and sometimes subtle, often striking and occasionally unbelievable. But when the human mind is fully activated, it performs in ways that challenge scientific explanation and sometimes demolish theories of education. The chief value in individualization, and its most compelling justification, is precisely that it provides greater scope for involving, evoking and provoking the full intellectual powers of each student. The individualizer's first task is therefore here, rather than in mere proliferation of alternative printed or recorded resources, or in mere tinkering with details which seem inappropriate for a given student or group of students.

But the intellect never comes forth by itself, any more than blood flows independent of heart, liver, kidneys or lungs. The linguistic skills that a student gets out of some one element of a course are only the most superficial part of what that element has meant to him. The same element that provides practice of the present subjunctive also has significance for the student's self-esteem, for his perception of the esteem that others have for him, for his feelings of security or insecurity, and for his sense of affiliation or disaffiliation with groups both within the classroom itself and in the country where the language is spoken. It is these more profound meanings that will either bind the student's personality or release it, and only as the whole person is free can the part that we call 'mind' become free to deal with the present subjunctive or the names of the animals in a barnyard.

The kind of individualization that strives to deal with 'depth' in this sense will of course make use of adjustments in 'longitudinal' speed and in 'lateral' variety of subject matter. It will also, as we have said, exploit the endless possibilities for lexical and structural variation. But it will do so with reference to a final pair of axes, which are again largely independent of one another. These are 'difficulty' and 'responsibility.'

There is no need to describe the continuum of 'difficulty' for any experienced teacher is already familiar with it. The thoughtful individualizer may want to remember that fine gradation of difficulty may be applied to the techniques of presentation and practice as well as to the materials themselves. But perhaps the most important thing that we are saying here about difficulty is that it does not have to vary with the amount of responsibility.

Likewise, the term 'responsibility' requires very little discussion. It is used here in very much its everyday sense. It is the sum of the choices that we leave open to the student, and choice is a major prerequisite for creativity, and creativity is quickly and firmly tied to many of the deeper needs. Responsibility comes in all sizes and in all shapes, some of which we teachers think about more readily than we think about others.

Earl Stevick
Foreign Service Institute
Arlington, Virginia

## BOOK AVAILABLE

The author of this thought-provoking note has recently completed one of the most helpful books available on adapting and writing language lessons. It can be purchased through the Language and Area Research Section, Division of Foreign Studies, Institute of International Studies, U.S. Office of Education, Department of H.E.W., Washington, D.C. 20202. Ask for Adapting and Writing Language Lessons by Earl W. Stevick of the Foreign Service Institute (1971).

## MAJOR STATEMENTS ON INDIVIDUALIZATION

Rand-McNally has announced the second printing of Individualization of Instruction in Foreign Languages: A Practical Guide, R. L. Gougher ed. Distributed before by the Center for Curriculum Development, the book will now be available at: Foreign Language Division--Education Division, Rand McNally & Co., P.O. Box 7600, Chicago, Ill. 60680. Along with Individualizing Foreign Language Instruction, Altman and Politzer, eds. (Newbury House: Rowley, Mass.), it was named one of the two major statements on individualization in the ACTFL Review, 1972.

## Guidelines for an Inservice Workshop and Checklist of Learning Activities and Objectives

Especially for teachers and administrators who must direct inservice programs to help individualize foreign language instruction.

Check each item whenever you feel you understand the concept and could implement

it in your teaching program.

I. I understand the rationale for Individualized Foreign Language Instruction and the following related components:

___ Definition of Individualized Foreign Language Instruction.
___ Need for revised grading and credit systems.
___ Need to foster student inquiry, student self-evaluation, student involvement in setting goals.
___ Problems with drill methods and lock step approach in context of today's schools.
___ Changed role of the teacher in Individualized Foreign Language Instruction.

II. I have gained sufficient information to take the following initial steps in implementing Individualized Foreign Language Instruction.

___ Assess existing program and its adaptability (Points of resistance, existing materials. Where is the starting point?).
___ Write a program proposal for board or for administration.
___ Gain administrative approval and help.
___ Assess total needs of new program (human resources, hardware, software).
___ Establish a commitment and develop procedures for use of time.
___ Prepare staff members (Inservice training, observation of existing programs, appropriate background reading).
___ Involve the total department for better articulation and cooperation.

III. I have prepared some of the following materials for implementation of Individualized Foreign Language Instruction in my own program.

___ Write performance objectives.
___ Write student checklists, guidelines, handbooks, etc., for text, supplementary materials and hardware.
___ Prepare steps and procedures for student orientation.
___ Arrange for cooperation of parents.
___ Outline duties of aides, paraprofessionals, tutors, and all others involved.
___ Establish procedures for teaching students the process of learning in Individualized Foreign Language Instruction.

IV. I am prepared to offer the following alternatives for more complete Individualized Foreign Language Instruction.

___ Alternative text materials with guidelines for independent and small group study.
___ Alternative supplementary materials for vertical and horizontal progression.
___ A procedure for contracting student work.
___ Additional hardware for individual student work.
___ Preparation for new student groupings for oral drill, remedial work, peer cooperation and interaction.

___ Rearrangement of facilities to conform to Individualized Foreign Language Instruction.
___ New opportunities for study of special interest and skill areas.

V. I am prepared to obtain and utilize all help available.

___ Teachers aides (Where and what do they do?)
___ Volunteer native speaker tutors (Where and what do they do?)
___ Consultant if necessary.
___ Peer cooperation and interact on (This is a whole new field!)

VI. I have established procedures for student evaluation and for program evaluation.

___ Pre-test and placement in program.
___ Final testing of objectives, units, packages, etc.
___ Testing for overall progress at time intervals that I can manage successfully.
___ Student evaluation of the program and procedures.
___ Testing for progress in the affective domain (Study skills, attitudes, initiative, responsibility, responsiveness).

VII. I have established an attitude for change, experimentation, observation, and testing in the following areas:

___ New techniques for presentation of the four skills in foreign language learning.
___ New techniques for creating peer interaction and real use of the target language.
___ Creation of motivating and relevant learning atmosphere.
___ Establishment of new relationship with my foreign language students.
___ Increased attention to affective areas of foreign language learning (Perception, attitude, skills, receiving, experimenting with use of language, risk, of failure, initiative, self-evaluation).

The above represents an effort to lead in-service teachers to individualization of their foreign language instruction. It works best as a sharing of responsibilities that demands full teacher participation. Final success, to be sure, is determined by the many variables brought by each individual teacher to the class.

Robert McClennan
Mountain View High School
Mountain View, California

## REPORT OF WORKSHOP AVAILABLE

A one hundred page report of the West Chester Workshop on Individualizing Foreign Language Instruction, Summer, 1972, will be available soon at ERIC-MLA, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011. It includes schedules, papers, student projects, discussions, bibliography, and a list of participants, and emphasizes analysis of programs by teachers. It can be purchased in microfiche or hard copy.

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## NOTES OF INTEREST

A Teacher's Guide to the Adaptation of Basic Texts to Individualized Instruction should be available soon. Written and edited by Ronald L. Gougher, Philip D. Smith, and David E. Wolfe, it contains general principles for individualizing foreign language instruction plus sample materials already used in teaching French, German, and Spanish in the United States. The document is an outcome of a U.S.O.E. grant intended to produce a small, concise handbook for public school teachers. For further information write to Professor Gougher at West Chester State College.

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Educators seeking a concise report on individualization of foreign language instruction might be interested in obtaining the Northeast Conference Reports, 1973. It contains brief, to-the-point statements about problems in individualizing foreign language instruction by Lorraine Strasheim, John Bockman, Philip D. Smith, Howard Altman, Aline Desbonnet, and Alfred D. Roberts.

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Workshops on individualizing foreign language instruction are to be offered again in 1973 at West Chester State College and the University of Washington. Information can be obtained by writing to Professor Gougher at West Chester State College, West Chester, Pa. and Professor Altman at the University of Washington or Lester McKim of Bellevue Public Schools, Bellevue, Washington.

### Individualized Spanish for English Speakers

Mirta Vega, Director
Dade County School System
Miami, Florida

For 1972-73, it is a developmental program whose staff is writing and producing tapes and visuals for packages of self-instructional materials.

The materials of the Individualized Spanish for English Speakers program can be compared to a tree with a trunk and branches. The Trunk is the basic body of knowledge and the branches are the extensions of the material for the academic program of Levels I-II in addition to the vocational areas of automotive services, barber/beauty work, food services, radio/TV repair and retail sales. Thus, the entire project will provide choices to the student.

The program will provide for self-instruction in learning to speak, with sufficient reading and writing exercises to complement the speaking skills. The materials are divided into cursillos which provide very minimal steps of learning as in true programmed texts and also furnish opportunities for group work and constant teacher contact.

Teachers who will field test the materials, starting in January 1973 will receive special in-service training. They have been selected from public and private schools, community adult schools and Miami Dade Junior College.